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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 000463

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STATE FOR EUR/NCE JENSEN AND NEA/I BETTS

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TAGS: [KTIA](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOFA](#) [RO](#)  
SUBJECT: ROMANIA ON THE IRAQ SOFA: "WE NEED A LEGAL  
FRAMEWORK NO LATER THAN JULY"

REF: A. STATE 55889 B. BAGHDAD 01536 C. STATE 53211 D. BUCHAREST 00250

Classified By: Political Counsellor Ted Tanoue; Reasons 1.4(b) and (d),

¶1. (S) EMBOFFS met with MOD Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy and Planning Rear Admiral Mihai Cornell and MFA Director for Middle East and Africa Ambassador Mihail Dobre on June 5, to review status of Iraq SOFA negotiations at the request of MOD and MFA. POLMILOFF, drawing on reftels A and B, described the negotiations as serious and making "substantial progress," coming to agreement on a number of provisions. POLMILOFF noted that the pace for the next negotiations were generally set by the Iraqi negotiators, and hopefully the next round will bring the SOFA within range of closure. Cornell expressed appreciation for the update, and noted that Romania would be making a decision on the 2009 overseas military deployment levels at the meeting of the Supreme Council for National Defense (CSAT) at the end of June. He said "we have the political will, determination and commitment. What we do not have is a legal framework." Cornell insisted that the GOR needed an agreed SOFA as a prerequisite for a legal framework for the continued deployment of Romanian troops in Iraq no later than July because of the requirement to get Parliamentary ratification in September. Otherwise, he continued, Romania would have to start contingency planning to withdraw its troops from Iraq."

¶2. (S) Cornell noted that when CHOD Admiral Marin met with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mullen, Marin was told that the U.S. would provide assistance for developing a SOFA with Iraq. He added that the most appropriate solution would be to use the U.S. "template", but Bucharest's political deadlines "force us to be diligent on this issue." He argued that September was the last realistic date for Parliamentary discussion, since national elections were planned for November -- meaning October would be dedicated to their electoral campaign schedule. The worse case scenario was for the General Staff to begin planning for withdrawal, he warned. He underscored the importance of having a draft SOFA to begin working on at the earliest opportunity. "There can be only one positive solution," Cornell emphasized, "a legal framework."

¶3. (S) Dobre raised Romania's discussions at the meeting in Stockholm at the International Compact meeting, emphasizing Romania's broader commitment to Iraq's reintegration into the region. He also noted that Romania was the first non-Paris Club member to have forgiven up to 80 percent of Iraqi debt, to help Baghdad authorities to cope. He said the Romanian representative, Secretary of State Niculescu, hoped Romania's debt forgiveness would be used as a model by others. Dobre also mentioned that during the meeting of coalition partners in London, UK representatives raised "off-line" with Romania the possibility of a "limited UNSCR" that would provide an easy way out for everyone requiring a legal framework for

continued operations. If the USG was thinking of such a possibility as a last minute strategy, Dobre pleaded, "please let us know immediately."

14. (S) Dobre confirmed that Romania's discussions with the Iraqi embassy in Bucharest have indicated support in Baghdad for Romania's continued engagement in the coalition. "They want the international coalition to remain in Iraq," according to Dobre. In fact, he noted, the Iraqi Ambassador was trying to set up a visit by President Talabani to Bucharest this fall -- possibly as early as October. The visit was important for Romania in order to demonstrate its broadening and deepening engagement with Iraq, Dobre added.

15. (S) Cornell asked when to expect another update on the SOFA. POLMILOFF suggested after July 4 would likely be the next best opportunity, and reiterated that much of the pace was dependent on the Iraqi negotiators. Cornell acknowledged the point and noted that MOD and MFA would need something to work on.

16. (S) COMMENT: The Romanian election calendar will be an important factor for the GOR in pursuing its plan for continued Romanian deployment in Iraq, since the decision must be ratified by Parliament this fall. Without a SOFA in hand -- or some other politically acceptable legal framework -- Romania could have challenges staying the course in Iraq. While our Romanian partners remain eager to make this work, and we expect a positive decision on continued Iraq troop deployments at the June CSAT, there are real concerns in Bucharest about the clock running out before a new mandate is constructed. End comment.

TAUBMAN